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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2987
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHTN/AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN PRIORITY 5154
RUEHDU/AMCONSUL DURBAN PRIORITY 9438
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 004217

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [SF](#)
SUBJECT: ANC ELECTIONS: ZUMA WINS PRESIDENCY

REF: PRETORIA 4202 AND PREVIOUS

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Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Catherine E. Kay. Reasons 1.
4(b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Results of elections for the six ANC leadership positions were released at 20:30 local (13:30 EST), revealing a clean sweep for the Zuma camp. Winners are as follows:

President: Jacob Zuma (previous ANC Deputy President) won with 2,329 votes. Mbeki received 1,505 votes; there were 8 spoiled ballots and 1 abstention.

Deputy President: Kgalema Motlanthe (previous ANC Secretary General) wins with 2,346 votes. Mbeki camp candidate ForMin Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma received 1,444 votes; there were 7 spoiled ballots and 44 abstentions.

Chairperson: Baleka Mbete (current National Assembly Speaker) wins with 2,326 votes. Mbeki camp candidate presidential advisor Joel Netshitenzhe received 1,475 votes; there were 7 spoiled ballots and 18 abstentions.

Secretary General: Gwede Mantashe (current South African

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Communist Party Chairman) won with 2,378 votes. Mbeki camp candidate DefMin Mosiuoa received 1,432 votes; there were 5 spoiled ballots and 42 abstentions.

Deputy Secretary General: Thandi Modise (current Speaker of North West provincial assembly) won with 2,304 votes. Mbeki camp candidate Public Works Minister Thoko Didiza Msane received 1,455 votes; there were 7 spoiled ballots and 82 abstentions.

Treasurer General: Mathews Phosa (former Mpumalanga premier) won with 2,328 votes. Mbeki camp candidate Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka received 1,374 votes; there were 2 spoiled ballots and 136 abstentions.

(NOTE: Mbete originally had emerged from the provincial general councils as a nominee for DepSecGen, but was nominated from the floor for Chair at yesterday evening's plenary session, following Tokyo Sexwale's withdrawal of his candidacy and endorsement of hers. Mbete subsequently withdrew her candidacy for DepSecGen and Modise was nominated

from the floor as a replacement candidate, presumably to improve gender balance on the Zuma camp's list of candidates. (END NOTE.)

¶12. (SBU) The plenary is scheduled to take nominations from the floor for additional candidates to the National Executive Council later this evening. This will offer losing candidates the opportunity to stand for the NEC and avoid total exclusion from party leadership structures. Voting for the 80 non-leadership NEC positions will take place on 19 December. The ANC national conference plenary voted yesterday evening to expand the NEC from 60 to 80 members and to impose a requirement that at least 50% of the NEC (or 43 total members) must be female. (NOTE: The six leadership slots are considered part of the NEC.)

¶13. (SBU) Zuma supporters were jubilant upon hearing the results, periodically shutting down the overall announcement of office-winners with cheers, chanting and singing. Fireworks were released immediately afterwards and local Durban radio reported Zuma supporters out in the streets cheering and honking horns. Mbeki accepted the results stoically, escorting Zuma to the stage and embracing him. All winners embraced/shook hands with the losing candidates. Mbeki supporters appear to have accepted the results with grace and without protest.

Comment

¶14. (C) This is a clear-cut defeat for Mbeki, which gravely undermines his ability to direct party selection of his successor as national president in 2009. However, he is still the national president -- he and his cabinet remain in full control of government. There is no indication Zuma's victory will result in any immediate, drastic changes in South African policy.

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¶15. (C) Zuma unquestionably has won control of the ANC, which commands the loyalty of approximately 70% of the South African electorate. But he is not yet guaranteed the national presidency in 2009. Should Mbeki decide to continue to fight on behalf of an alternate successor, the next fourteen months will be rocky. If he instead focuses his energies on ensuring a smooth transition and the retention of as many technocrats as possible from his current team, we are in for a much easier ride. We may not know which path Mbeki will choose for several weeks, but we expect his intentions will be clear by the time he delivers his annual State of the Nation address at the opening of Parliament in early February.

¶16. (C) The other outstanding question is whether Zuma's victory will bring him sufficient political clout to evade indictment on corruption charges. By all accounts, the National Prosecuting Authority has a solid case against him. In affidavits filed last week in conjunction with Zuma's current application to the Constitutional Court for leave to appeal the admissibility of certain evidence, the NPA indicates it has documented 354 separate illicit payments to Zuma totalling over R4 million. If Zuma's last-ditch Constitutional Court appeal fails, only intervention at the political levels may prevent the NPA from refiling corruption charges against him. Conviction and sentencing on those charges in 2008 would disqualify Zuma from candidacy for the National Assembly in the 2009 parliamentary elections, thereby scuttling his chances of obtaining the national presidency. The courts are currently in recess for the summer holiday season, so it may be several months before we know whether Zuma will be recharged.

BOST